



**Zeke's Island Reserve  
Local Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, October 28, 2014 – 10 am  
Fort Fisher Recreation Area Education Room**

**Attendance**

<b><u>LAC Partner Organization Members</u></b>	<b><u>Present</u></b>
Division of Archives and History, Nathan Henry	No
Division of Parks and Recreation – FFRA, Jeff Owen	Yes
NC Aquarium at Fort Fisher, Renee Weeks	Yes
<b><u>Community Members</u></b>	
Captain John Carty	No
Dr. Anthony Snider	No
<b><u>Others Present</u></b>	
Hope Sutton, DCM/NCCR & NCNERR Stewardship Coordinator/Southern Sites Manager	
Rebecca Ellin, DCM/NCCR & NCNERR Reserve Manager	
Paula Gillikin, DCM/NCCR & NCNERR Central Sites Manager	
Heather Wells, DCM/NCCR & NCNERR Research Biologist	
Byron Toothman, DCM/NCCR & NCNERR Research Biologist	
Marie Davis, DCM/NCCR & NCNERR Education Specialist	
Caroline Cook, UNCW Intern	
Chris Ellis, NOAA Office for Coastal Management, Facilitator	
Michele Walker, DENR/DCM Public Information Officer	
Stephanie Robinson, NOAA Office for Coastal Management, Coastal Management Specialist	

**Focus Group Session for NCNERR Management Plan Update**

Chris Ellis facilitated a focus group session with Local Advisory Committee members as part of the NCNERR 2016-2021 management plan update process. A series of questions was provided to LAC members prior to the meeting and served as the basis for the focus group discussion, focusing on three primary areas: program management, coastal community involvement, and partnership opportunities. Specific topics discussed included: current environmental topics critical to the NCNERR; NCNERR program offerings and activities; visitor management concerns and opportunities; program priorities for the next five years; community awareness and

connection to the Reserve; engagement of local communities; and partnership opportunities. The discussion allowed LAC members to provide input on the Reserve's activities and priorities. Input gathered from each of the LACs for the four sites within the NCNERR will be incorporated into strategic planning activities as the updated management plan is drafted.

### **Reserve Program Update**

- Welcome to Dr. Brandon Puckett, new Research Coordinator. Brandon began work August 25 in our Beaufort office. Brandon has a BS in Environmental Science from NCSU, a Master's in Fisheries Science from University of Maryland, and a PhD in Marine Science from NCSU. He brings with him extensive knowledge and basic and applied research and monitoring experience in NC estuarine systems. His recent work includes a blend of field ecology, oceanography, and population modeling to assess the function of marine reserves and design of reserve networks, as well as developing decision-support tools for ecological restoration. Additionally, Brandon's demonstrated ability to work with stakeholders and transfer results to management and conservation topics make him an excellent addition to our team.
- The DENR AmeriCorps project has been discontinued, so the Reserve will not have the volunteer coordinator position during the next two years, as previously reported.
- The Site Manager reported that a request has been submitted to the Secretary of the Department of Environmental and Natural Resources to extend terms of Local Advisory Committee Members serving in community member seats that are due to expire in December 2014. The request for extension has been submitted to ensure continuity throughout the NCNERR Management Plan Update process. Members will be notified as soon as this request is processed. If granted, current members with terms due to expire on December 31, 2014, would serve through December 31, 2015. An application and appointment process would be undertaken during the fall of 2015.

### **Site Update & Old Business**

- No unusual occurrences or site issues to report.
- The scheduled white poplar treatment was postponed twice due to weather. This invasive species can be treated any time of year; treatment will be rescheduled in the coming months for a date and time to be agreed upon by Reserve staff and leadership of the Southeastern Coastal Area Chapter of the NC Native Plant Society.
- A site cleanup scheduled for June was also postponed due to weather. It will be rescheduled in the near future. Parks staff will be notified regarding the date.
- The Site Manager summarized the findings of the commercial user engagement process site managers undertook earlier in the year. Overall, feedback across the sites was positive. Site managers learned that those commercial operators interested in engaging in dialogue and attending information sessions are also interested in information exchange. Annual data submission requests will begin this fall, to be followed by continuation of annual information sessions and meetings during the winter.

### **New Business**

- None

### **Roundtable Discussion**

- Ms. Weeks reported that the Aquarium hosted 19 canoe trips to Zeke's Island through the season, with a total of 173 participants, including camp participants, members of the general public, and scouts.
- Mr. Owen suggested that a meeting occur between Parks staff and Reserve research and stewardship staff to discuss research and monitoring programs. He reported that the FFRA has new staff who will be developing more monitoring activities within the Bald Head Island Natural Area and there may opportunities to work together on some efforts.

### **Public Comments**

- None

### **Action Items**

- The Site Manager will convene a meeting between Reserve research and stewardship staff and Parks staff to discuss research and monitoring activities.
- The Site Manager will contact committee members in January 2015 to schedule the next meeting, likely to occur in March, during which the draft strategic management plan will be discussed. Other meetings for 2015 will be scheduled based on progress of the management plan update process, but are likely to occur in summer and fall.